How Climate Change Affects Communities Nationwide

Earlier this month, the White House released the third U.S. National Climate Assessment revealing the dangerous effects climate change is already having – and will continue to have – on regions across the nation. From extreme weather and water shortages to rising food prices and seasonal allergies, the report serves as a call to action for Americans to work together to secure a more sustainable future. Here's a look at the most recent data from 2012 showing just a few of the ways climate change is affecting Americans:

Economy

- Climate and weather disasters in 2012 cost the American economy more than $100 billion.
- The effects of climate change on agriculture will have consequences for food security through changes in crop yields and food prices and effects on food processing, storage, and retailing.
- Sea level rise increases the risk of major coastal impacts on transportation infrastructure, including flooding of ports and harbors, roads, rail lines, tunnels, and bridges.

Health

- Climate change amplifies existing health threats through extreme weather events, wildfire, decrease in air quality, threats to mental health, and illnesses transmitted by food, water, and disease carriers, such as mosquitoes and ticks.
- Children's lung development and older Americans' diminished ability to regulate body temperature make these groups two of the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, in addition to the poor, sick, and some communities of color.

Weather

- 2012 was the warmest year on record for the U.S., accompanied by an increase in storms, droughts, and heat waves.
- Temperatures are projected to rise another 2°F to 4°F in most areas of the United States over the next few decades and up to 10°F by the end of the century if serious reductions in our emissions are not made.
- In 2012, precipitation was 2.57 inches below the 20th century average and wildfires burned more than 9.3 million acres in the U.S.

Although many Republicans in Congress deny the existence or impact of climate change, the majority of Americans acknowledges the reality and need for intervention:

- "More Americans believe increases in the Earth's temperature over the last century are due to pollution from human activities (57%) than to naturally occurring changes in the environment." [Gallup, 3/18/14]
- "Sixty-seven percent of Americans believe there is solid evidence that the earth has been getting warmer over the last few decades." [Pew, 11/1/13]

Office of Democratic Whip Steny H. Hoyer, 05/21/14